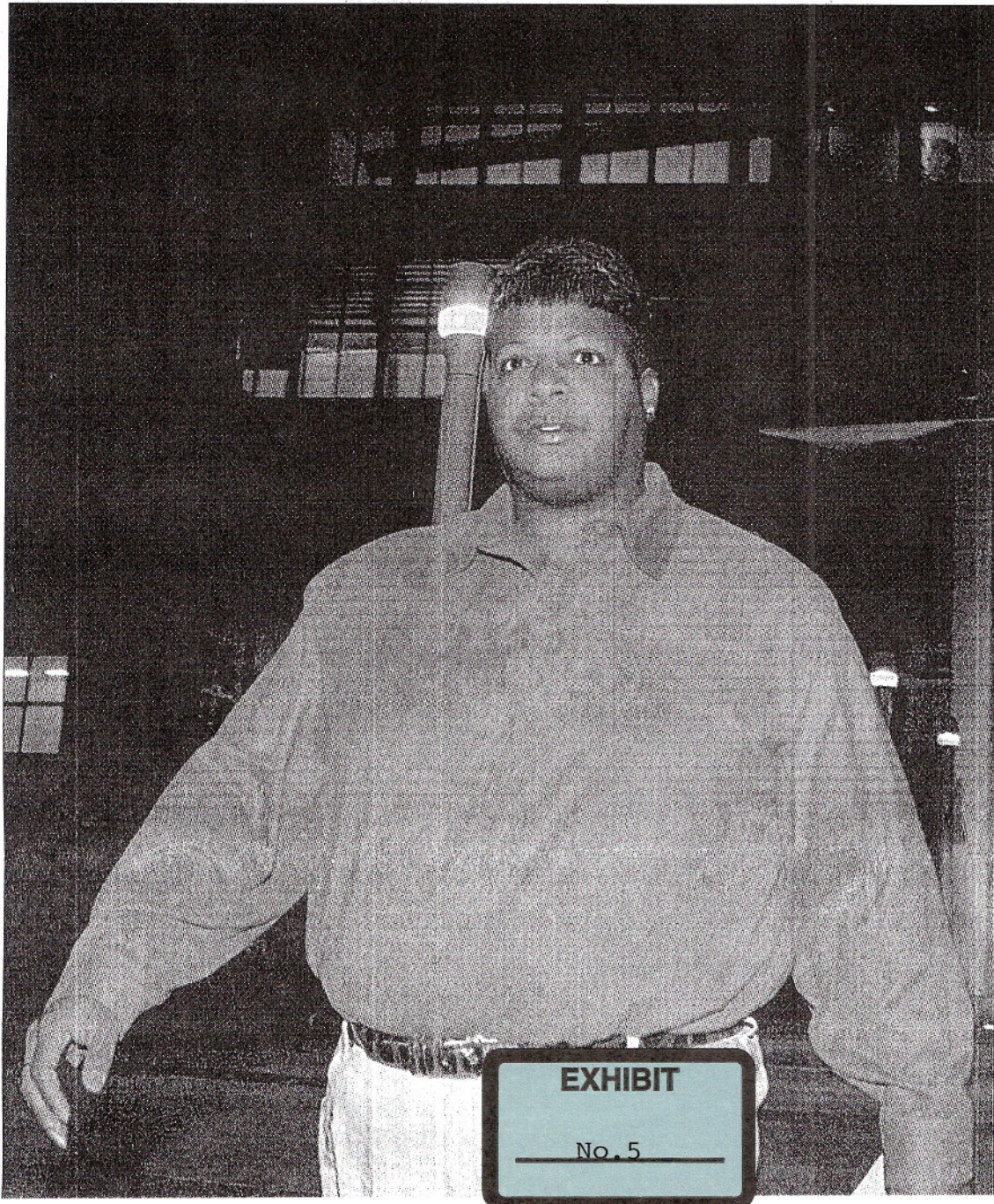


Third jailer pleads guilty



The other defendants

Dedri Yulon Caldwell is among four former jailers who face possible prison time in connection with a conspiracy to abuse inmates at the Harrison County jail. She is the only one not accused of participating in the fatal beating on Feb. 4 of inmate Jessie Lee Williams Jr. The other defendants:



Teel

up to 20 years in prison on the other. Prosecutors have until Feb. 16 to decide if they wish to seek the death penalty.

■ **Regina Lynn Rhodes:**

Pleaded guilty Aug. 8 to deprivation of rights under color of law and to falsifying information. Her sentencing Oct. 16 was postponed after the FBI seized inmate records from the sheriff's courthouse and jail offices. Faces up to 13 years in prison.



Rhodes

■ **Morgan Lee Thompson:**

Pleaded guilty Nov. 20 to conspiracy to deprive rights under color of law. Prosecutors said he restrained Williams during an unprovoked and unjustified beating. Sentencing is Jan. 30. Faces up to 10 years in prison.



Thompson

100 inmates assaulted, U.S. attorney says

By ROBIN FITZGERALD

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GULFPORT — A third person previously employed at the Harrison County jail pleaded guilty Wednesday to conspiring to deprive inmates of their rights under color of law.

Dedri Yulon Caldwell, 45, signed a plea agreement to assist the federal government in its criminal investigation. She faces up to 10 years in prison and a possible fine of \$250,000 at sentencing, tentatively set for March 6.

The five-year corrections officer, promoted to sergeant, admitted the conspiracy existed before and throughout her employment at the jail. She also admitted using illegal drugs and agreed to enter a 30-day treatment program followed by random drug testing.

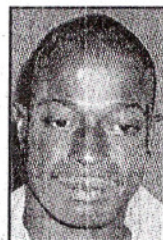
Caldwell entered the corrections profession "with the best of intentions," said her attorney, Robert Harenski, "but she was led astray by her supervisors at the jail."

Harenski said she is ashamed of her conduct and is willing "to make amends" by sharing information on related incidents at the jail.

The federal government launched its investigation after a wrongful-death civil lawsuit was filed in federal court. The lawsuit alleges a pattern of abuse existed at the jail before the fatal beating of inmate Jessie Lee Williams Jr. on Feb. 4.

Caldwell was terminated about six weeks before Williams' assault in the jail booking room.

John Richmond, a federal trial attorney, told U.S.



Williams

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FOR HOME DELIVERY,

Hearing

Continued from A-1

District Judge Louis Guirola he can prove that Caldwell conspired with others to use "unnecessary, unreasonable and unjustified" force on inmates. He also said Caldwell directed others to assault inmates and conspired with others to conceal the abusive conduct with false reports or no reports at all.

Richmond said the conspiracy began before April 23, 2001, when Caldwell went to work at the jail, and continued through at least Dec. 21, 2005. He said Caldwell participated in more than 100 inmate assaults and observed co-conspirators assault

more than 100 inmates.

Caldwell pleaded to a criminal information, a written list of accusations that could have been presented to a grand jury for possible indictment. Prosecutors recently used the same process to strike plea bargains with former jailers Morgan Thompson and Regina Rhodes. Another former jailer, Ryan Teel, is in custody awaiting trial on related charges that accuse him of attempting to kill Williams.

Attorney Michael W. Crosby, representing Williams' estate, commended the federal government for the depth of its criminal investigation and described Caldwell's "honesty and candor" as "refreshing."

Although she was not at the jail when Jessie was beaten, she corroborates a pattern of abuse existed. It was inevitable that someone was going to be killed."

Caldwell, appearing first before U.S. Magistrate John Roper, said she is depressed because she faces prison time and has a drug problem. Caldwell told Roper she used marijuana and cocaine on Tuesday. Roper said he was told she has smoked marijuana for 10 years. He promised to put her in jail if she tests positive for drugs after undergoing treatment.

District Attorney Cono Caranna has agreed to not prosecute her on any related state charges if she cooperates fully with the federal investigation.